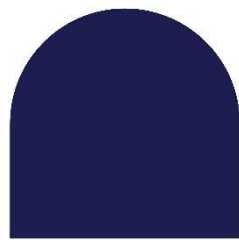


Sabbatical for Artistic Research Grant

Guidelines and Regulations 2025



ARTS
COUNCIL
MALTA

ISSUED: SEPTEMBER 2025

ALLOCATIONS

SESSION BUDGET	MAXIMUM ELIGIBLE AMOUNT PER PROJECT
EUR 80,000	EUR 20,000

CO-FUNDING	DISBURSEMENT
The fund may cover up to 100% of total project costs	Refer to Section 7 for the schedule of payments

TIMEFRAMES

DEADLINE	RESULTS	ELIGIBLE TIMEFRAME
21st October 2025	27th November 2025	1st January 2026 – 30th June 2027

1. Introduction

The *Sabbatical for Artistic Research Grant* is one of Arts Council Malta's tools to enable individuals to engage in artistic research which is practice-based or practice-led and aimed towards developing and exploring new ideas, methodologies, materials, and techniques towards further artistic development. This grant fulfils the Council's Education and Development action (Strategy2025) to invest in research and creativity by introducing a sabbatical grant for artists and practitioners. Furthermore, the grant fulfils several strategic priorities outlined by the Council in the Strategy2025 document, namely:

- Nurturing creative potential and supporting development by encouraging creatives to engage in practice-based research and investigation;
- Investing in artistic excellence by encouraging levels of creative risk, experimentation, and active engagement of artists, as well as identifying talent and encouraging its development;
- Fostering artistic collaborations and partnerships for the development of the local artistic scene;
- Expanding opportunities for career pathways in the arts;
- Investing in twenty-first-century skills.

The grant forms part of Arts Council Malta's funding schemes which aim to invest in exploratory projects that allow creative professionals to investigate aspects related to their artistic practice, explore and test their work, engage with new methods and technologies, conduct research, collaborate with creatives and relevant professionals, and develop their ideas further. Applications submitted may form part of the initial phase of a wider project/body of work or can be self-contained.

The objective of the scheme is to support research in the cultural and creative sectors, as per the National Cultural Policy 2021. As stated in the NCP 2021, artists working professionally in the sector may find it financially challenging to engage exclusively in artistic research for a significant period of time without compromising their income and financial commitments. The Council firmly believes in the importance of artistic research and the need for artists to renew and reflect on their practice. The initiative will support freelance creative practitioners who wish to take a sabbatical period of one year by providing an income and following agreed-upon outcomes and objectives.

The aims of the grant follow those of the Vienna Declaration on Artistic Research to support the expansion of knowledge and understanding of artistic research.

Applicants may choose to focus on one or more of these areas within their projects:

- Exploratory research adopting innovative or untested approaches in the conception, creation, and development of artistic work;
- Research into digital technologies and AI and how these inform contemporary artistic practices;
- Experimenting with innovative methods of community-led artistic engagement.

The sabbatical year needs to be planned as a twelve month-long artistic research activity by applicants who are committed to: i. not engage themselves on work on a full-time basis elsewhere but ii. who may accept occasional/casual work (e.g. commissions/projects) on a part-time basis, thus leaving ample time and other resources to completing the tasks pertaining to the proposed sabbatical.

The sabbatical will include regular meetings with a mentor assigned by Arts Council Malta. At the end of the sabbatical period, the grant participants will have the opportunity to present their project and findings through an event aimed at sharing the insights that emerge from the artistic research.

Requirements in line with ongoing strategy

In line with its commitment to supporting the arts through its sustainable and accountable approach to public investment, ACM draws applicants' attention to the following in line with its Strategy 2025:

Applicants are required to consider the principles expressed through its [Right to Culture – Resource Pack](#) when developing their proposal in relation to how they engage with communities and the considerations of everyone's cultural rights in their work. The resource pack is aimed at increasing awareness regarding inclusivity and supporting the implementation of cultural rights in our day-to-day practice.

Applicants are also required to consider the [Charter for the Status of the Artist](#) when proposing their operational and programming activities to ensure acceptable and decent working conditions for artists and creative practitioners which embraces artistic freedom, accessibility, formal/informal/non-formal skill recognition, decent socio-economic conditions, non-discrimination and equity, ethical considerations and adherence to intellectual property rights and international labour law. The Charter for the Status of the Artist is meant to provide a dynamic frame of reference for any legislation, policy, or initiative which directly or indirectly impacts artists and cultural and creative sectors, ensuring that any action is aligned with the ultimate long-term vision of elevating the status of artists in Malta in line with their tangible value to society.

2. Definitions

Activities falling within the cultural and creative sector:

1. Arts (literature, visual arts, music, performing arts, interdisciplinary);
2. Creative Business Services (design, architecture, cultural tourism, and cultural services);
3. Heritage (crafts, traditional festivals and celebrations, cultural sites, antiquities);
4. Media (publishing and printed material, audiovisuals, including film and video production, film servicing, television, video games, radio, online media).

Applicant

- An applicant may be a creative practitioner who is a full time self-employed. Applicants cannot be employees of Arts Council Malta or involved in the management of the *Sabbatical for Artistic Research Grant*.

Application

- An application is a submission, inclusive of all mandatory documents and any annexes to the application form made by an eligible applicant.

Artistic Research

- Artistic research refers to the process of using research methods and approaches to explore artistic practice. It involves the investigation and generation of new knowledge in the field of artistic practice.

Beneficiary

The beneficiary is the recipient of the grant. The beneficiary is responsible for the implementation of the proposal supported by the Scheme. The beneficiary of the grant may not be changed throughout the duration of the funded project and until the final disbursement is issued. The disbursement of the grant may only be issued on behalf of the beneficiary.

Community

- A group of people who share values, customs, identities or practices.

Creative professionals

- All artistic and creative individuals professionally active in the cultural and creative sectors.

Diversity

- Individual differences in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, culture, belief, language, and socioeconomic background in communities, creatives, and audiences.

Eligibility

- Applications will first be screened in terms of technical and artistic eligibility by the Fund administrators and managers. Proposals which are not considered eligible in terms of the set criteria will not be processed further and will not undergo evaluation.

Evaluation

- Applications deemed compliant and eligible are evaluated against the criteria established in these guidelines by the appointed evaluators.

Evaluation Board

- Arts Council Malta appoints an Evaluation Board for each call under the Scheme. The appointed board may be composed of local or foreign professionals in the sector of culture and the arts.

Individual

- Individuals applying for a grant must be Maltese citizens; or be in possession of a Malta residence permit; or of a Maltese citizenship certificate; or of a Maltese passport.

Management and administration

- Arts Council Malta is responsible for the management of this scheme. All official correspondence, including the online submission of applications or updates to awarded proposals, must be sent to the address indicated in these guidelines.

Mandatory documentation

- Any document(s) needed to support your proposal and aiding the evaluation of your project (eg. track records, portfolios, artistic CVs, official correspondence confirming rental of space, permits or other).

Maximum Funding:

- There is a ceiling amount of €20,000 per project to be allocated. Amounts awarded will be decided on a case-by-case basis, depending on the project.

Practice-based artistic research

- Practical creative research led by a creative professional which aims at developing creative concepts.

Public Cultural Organisations

- Public cultural entities falling under the remit of Arts Council Malta which include Teatru Manoel, Mediterranean Conference Centre, Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, Fondazzjoni Kreattività, Pjazza Teatru Rjal, Valletta Cultural Agency, Malta International Contemporary Arts Space, Festivals Malta, and National Agency for Performing Arts.

3. Eligibility

Projects will first be screened in terms of technical and artistic eligibility. Ineligible proposals in terms of the points below will not be processed further and will not undergo evaluation.

The duration of the timeframe to implement the project is of 12 months.

3.1 Who can apply?

The scheme may focus on creative and/or practice-based artistic research, led by a creative practitioner. This scheme also encourages community-based research projects.

The grant is open to creative practitioners/individual artists who are full-time self-employed.

3.2 Who cannot apply?

The following are not eligible to apply for the *Sabbatical for Artistic Research Grant*:

- Applicants whose profile is not verified due to it being an incomplete profile for not having the below mandatory documents:
 - a copy of your Maltese ID card (including the front and back side) or your Maltese residence permit or your Maltese citizenship certificate or your Maltese passport.
- Applicants who do not qualify under the definition of applicant for this specific scheme.
- Beneficiaries who did not submit or complete at least one final report related to a previous grant funded by Arts Council Malta within the established timeframes.
- Beneficiaries who have not honoured previous funding commitments.
- Organisations/activities receiving local public funds through established government line-votes.

3.3 What costs can be covered?

This grant will support the creative practitioner's personal remuneration with an amount of €20,000 during the sabbatical period that will have the duration of 12 months.

For more information about presenting your budget, refer to our General Budget Guidelines available on <https://artscouncilmalta.gov.mt/funding-and-grants/general-budget-guidelines/>.

3.4 What costs cannot be covered?

This grant does not support costs incurred during the research phase.

3.5 What applications are not eligible?

The following activities are **not** eligible under this Fund:

- Activities which are not related to culture, the arts, and the creative industries;
- Activities whose objective is fundraising or political propaganda;
- Applications submitted after noon (12:00) of the respective day of deadline;
- Applications submitted by public entities with or without a line vote;
- Events held on a regular basis, including annual projects, annual festivals, school/annual shows, regular training programmes;
- Incomplete applications. Refer to application checklist in Section 5.1;
- Individual modules credited as part of an educational course or research as part of established academic programmes;
- Initiatives eligible under Screen Malta, TV Production and Content Fund, Annual Cultural Activities Scheme, VOPS, Għaqda Każini tal-Banda, National Book Council, Valletta Cultural Agency, Malta Arts Scholarships or any other state-funded programme dedicated to Maltese arts/culture;
- Projects that would have already started and/or taken place before the result is notified to applicant(s);
- Projects whose duration does not entirely fall within the eligible timeframe and/or does not meet the required duration of 12 months.

Any other activity which may be developed outside the scope of the *Sabbatical for Artistic Research Grant* is not eligible for support.

Applicants can submit more than one application under the same call. However, only one of the applications can be funded per session.

4. Evaluation

The Evaluation Board will base its decision upon the following criteria:

4.1 Criterion 1: Concept (60 marks)

This criterion considers the concept idea(s) of the proposal, its innovative potential, the relevance of the concept to the contemporary local and international arts scene, as well as the contribution towards the beneficiary's professional development:

- Explain the main research question being explored and its goals. Please provide your vision, aims of the research project, anticipated outcomes, and the groundwork that led to the proposal of the concept. (20 marks)

- How is this research project relevant and challenging to your artistic development and to your current creative practice? Please provide your trackrecord and portfolio with details about how this project will help in your artistic development. (10 marks)
- How is the proposed research project innovative? And how would the grant help you to experiment and push boundaries in terms of the work being proposed and the collaborations involved? What value will the research add to the community being actively engaged with or addressed through the project? Supporting this claim with relevant literature is recommended. (20 marks)
- How does your research project relate to Arts Council Malta's long-term vision and mission? (10 marks)

4.2 Criterion 2: Project management and Budget (40 marks)

This criterion considers the level of commitment and preparation prior to the proposal as well as the proposed plan to deliver and achieve aims and targets:

- Provide a clear plan of the research methodology which is going to be used during the research period. Provide the rationale for the selected methodology. Include timeframes, workplan with collaborators involved, and a step-by-step plan on how the research project will be developed. (20 marks)
- How will this research project achieve its ambition and meet its targets? (10 marks)
- Please submit a well-researched and well-planned budget document (10 marks)

5. Submitting the application

Follow these steps to apply:

1. Read these guidelines and regulations very carefully.
2. Check whether your proposed idea can be addressed by this scheme.
3. Press the link that will take you to the online application system.
4. Use your existing profile to apply. If you do not have a profile, create your profile with Arts Council Malta by clicking on Register and filling in the details. .
5. From the open calls section, select the online application for the scheme you intend to apply.
6. Follow the instructions step by step. Fill in all the required information from the online application, including the budget, and attach the supporting documentation.
7. Submit the application. You should be receiving an automatic acknowledgement by the system. If you do not receive such a notification, contact us on applyforfunds@artscouncil.mt.

Applicants are required to register a profile on the ACM's CRM at least two weeks prior to the deadline of the call.

In case of difficulty, or if you would like to consult us regarding this fund, you can call us on 2334 7230 Monday to Friday between 09:00 and 16:00 or email us on fundinfo@artscouncil.mt.

It is your responsibility to present a complete application form as explained in these guidelines and regulations. If you do not present all the necessary information and documentation, your application will not be processed and evaluated.

Prior to the application deadline, Arts Council Malta representatives will not be checking your application forms. It is solely at the Council's discretion to request that applicants provide any missing mandatory documentation following the call deadline.

Upon the submission of the application, applicants accept that should the application be awarded funding, the name, the project title, short project description and the amount awarded can be published by the Council.

A decision on funding will be made on the strength of the information submitted, including documentation in support of the proposal.

Applications submitted after 12.00 (noon) of the respective deadline cannot be accepted.

5.1 Checklist

In order to be complete, applications must be accompanied by:

- A commitment letter by the applicant stating that throughout the sabbatical year they will consider the research as being their main activity and that they shall be engaging in their practice on an occasional/casual and/or part-time basis;
- A copy of the VAT certificate of registration (as applicable);
- Acceptance letters by the relevant institutions, platforms or venues (as applicable);
- Audiovisuals/portfolio showing the applicant's work, as relevant to the proposal. Audiovisuals up to 5MB may be uploaded directly in the application form. Larger files may be provided as a link (as applicable);
- Biography/(artist) CV of the applicant to be included in the Applicant Profile section of the application;
- JobsPlus Employment History document;
- Signed letters of intent from collaborators, if applicable.

6. Evaluation process

This scheme is competitive and will be evaluated by a panel of relevant experts, according to established criteria.

As specified above, each criterion is allocated specific marks. In order to be considered for funding, projects have to obtain an average of 60 marks or more.

Nevertheless, the evaluation session and funding decisions depend on the quality of the submitted proposals as well as the availability of the funds. Therefore, obtaining 60 marks or more does not automatically mean that your project proposal has been successful. The Evaluation Board may decide not to allocate the total funds available for a particular call if the proposed projects do not reach the required level in terms of the fund criteria.

Eligible applications will be assessed by an evaluation team selected by the Arts Council Malta on the basis of their professional experience. The evaluators will present an assessment on each of the proposed projects, indicating the relevant ratings awarded.

6.1 Shortlisting

The Evaluation Board will meet during an initial evaluation session in which all eligible applications will be discussed. All applications will be given a score, and a shortlist of the top six candidates will be established. Those who rank in the top six positions will be invited for an interview. The top ranking four candidates will be offered the grant.

All applications, including those that are not shortlisted, will receive the official result notification together with a copy of the feedback form on the result date as indicated on page 2 of this document.

6.2 Interview session

The aim of the interview session is to provide an opportunity for applicants to make a case for their proposals to the evaluators. The grant applications would already have been reviewed by the evaluators and the fund managers before the interview.

During the session, the applicant has the opportunity of presenting comments, latest insights, and possible additions to the already submitted proposal.

The interview can be presented in a variety of formats, including but not limited to visual aids, PowerPoint presentations, audio, etc., but should not be longer than ten (10) minutes. During the interview, applicants are expected to explain the project's artistic vision and communicate how the project will be implemented. This ten-minute interview will be followed by a Q&A session with the panel of evaluators.

6.3 Communication of results

On the day indicated on page 2, you will receive your result notification from Arts Council Malta. Together with the covering letter, we will also attach a copy of the feedback form, indicating the reasons and marks leading to the Evaluation Board's decision, according to the fund criteria.

The order of classification of the projects, according to the marks allocated by the evaluators, will be published online. Only the names and summaries of the successful projects will be published; in the case of projects which have not been awarded any funds, only their reference number will be published.

If you have any difficulties concerning your results, you should email us on fundinfo@artscouncil.mt within five (5) days of receiving your funding decision.

No information on the evaluation process will be released before the official result notification. Any form of soliciting will automatically disqualify an application.

All information received by the Fund administrators, managers, and evaluators will be considered confidential, both during and after the evaluation process. Provisions on data protection and confidentiality for successful projects will be included in the Grant agreement.

7. Project implementation and monitoring

Beneficiaries must provide full documentation to support the application and budget plan within 30 days from receipt of the notification letter. Arts Council Malta will accept a variation of up to 5% from the proposed total cost. The contingency indicated in the budget plan will support any variations from the proposed total cost. **Under no circumstances will the Council be in a position to increase the grant awarded.**

Upon provision and approval of the above mandatory documentation, a contract specifying the conditions of the fund will be signed. The grant may only be awarded upon completion of the above process within the established timeframe.

The Sabbatical for Artistic Research grant will be disbursed to the beneficiaries on a quarterly basis and the first 20% disbursed upon signing of the agreement. Furthermore of the final payment shall be processed following the submission of the final report by the beneficiary and the approval by Arts Council Malta.

The disbursement of payments will thus be affected according to the below schedule:

upon signing of contract	€4,000
after first quarter	€4,000
after second quarter	€4,000
after third quarter	€4,000
upon approval of the final report	€4,000

The beneficiaries must use the Council's official logo on all related material and specify that the project was supported by the grant as follows: **Supported by Arts Council Malta**, in all marketing, PR, and printed material. The grant received must be used solely for the purpose for which it was awarded, in line with the submitted proposal and the contract.

Beneficiaries must notify the Council immediately if changes affecting the nature of the project take place during implementation. Changes cannot be implemented unless approval is received. The Council reserves the right to revise or withhold the final payment if the change in the project is not considered to be in line with the initial proposal, or if the Council is not informed of the changes within a reasonable time.

Beneficiaries must make themselves available for visits and communication with the Council's representatives for monitoring purposes both during the implementation of the project as well as after its completion.

The Council also reserves the right to revise the final payment if the total expenditure is less than that estimated in the application form.

7.1 Report

At the end of your project, you will be required to submit a detailed report highlighting the work carried out and the project achievements, by not later than six (6) weeks after your project has concluded. Arts Council Malta will provide a template for your report. If relevant, together with this report, beneficiaries must submit copies of any relevant marketing, publicity or information material developed for the funded project. Beneficiaries will also be requested to submit evidence of the research process, which includes visual documentation (a minimum of 5, high-res images should be submitted), blogs, and other documentation.

The Council retains the right to make use of submitted project material.

The Council retains the right to recover funds in case these are not being used and/or are misused and/or are not used according to the submitted budget.

8. Complaints procedure

Filing a complaint will not affect your chances of receiving support from Arts Council Malta in the future. All complaints will be treated with confidentiality.

8.1 Grounds for complaints

Applicants can make a complaint regarding procedural anomalies and irregularities during the submission and evaluation process in terms of the procedures stipulated in these guidelines and regulations. Complaints cannot be made concerning:

- The Arts Council's or Government's policies and procedures.
- The merits of the application in terms of the criteria stipulated in these guidelines and regulations.

Only applicants may file complaints concerning their project.

8.2 Filing a complaint

Complaints must be made in writing and must be as clear as possible. The complaint must state the grounds and the reasons for the complaint, providing a detailed explanation and justification supported by relevant documentation or testimonials as to why the complainant deems that irregularities were committed in the procedure/s stipulated in these guidelines and regulations or in standard good governance rules and regulations governing the public sector. The decision at the end of the complaint process shall be final. Complaints need to be made to the Director (Funding), Arts Council Malta, via e-mail on fundinfo@artscouncil.mt within five (5) working days of receipt of your funding decision. You will normally receive a reply to your complaint within ten (10) working days.

In case you are not satisfied with the reply, the Council will convene a board that will discuss your complaint further. If you approach our complaints procedure, then you are accepting that we can use information about your project to address the complaint. The decision of the board is final.

Need advice?

Arts Council Malta offers pre-submission consultation services to help secure support for your project. We are there every step of the way. We can help you determine whether the core concept and profile of your project are in line with the targeted support mechanism, and provide feedback on the way you plan to present your project. Plan ahead and get in touch with us at least four weeks before the submission deadline to make the best of our services.

You are welcome to call us on 2334 7230 on weekdays between 09:00 and 16:00 or to send us an email on fundinfo@artscouncil.mt.

Guidelines updated on 07th August 2025